

For Vermont Standard
For May 5 --Sage Sassafras column on gardening

Spring is ramping up. A test dig of two ramps in a secret cache reveals they're smaller than a pinkie. Just like like leeks, they will get fat, Fiddleheads follow; be sure to boil them twice, refreshing the water in between. As with asparagus fiddleheads are an excuse for extravagant spoonfuls of hollandaise blended up from farm-fresh eggs.

But wait a minute. This isn't a culinary column, although the lines blur when discussing planting and harvesting edible blooms and strawberries and vegetables.

So back to ramps. A recent New York Times article, "When Digging for Ramps Goes Too Deep," warns against the rape of the ramp, thus shoving it into endangered species status.

At the end of the day, and especially at the beginning of spring, it's all about mindfulness, isn't it.

The ruination of the Atlantic Rainforest to create coffee plantations dried up Rio de Janeiro's water a century ago. When people woke up, tropical forest was restored, the city had water and coffee barons counted beans elsewhere.

Women in butterfly-colored saris lower not buckets but teacups into the village well in Rajasthan. Emergency water trucks arrive in a few days because the wells are dry.

Dramatic stories? Yes. Apocryphal? No. But why should these issues concern gardeners in the greater Woodstock region? Because water, like ramps, can disappear, even as our own cups overflow.

Which brings us back to mindfulness. Left-over water from a flower vase or when refreshing the teapot on the stove can moisten a houseplant or two. Yes, you'll think: "Why am I doing this?" Perhaps to be mindful of Rio or India or Africa, or Tuscaloosa. You will fill in your own blanks.

Sustainable Woodstock is making lasting impressions in mindfulness as regards our food chains which leads to agriculture which leads to gardens. Throughout the growing season the Woodstock Garden Club will share thoughts on mindful gardening. Look for articles on invasive species, slugs, old wives' gardening tales and more.

In the meantime, happy gardening. Check www.woodstockgardenclub.org for gardening ideas and remember that if you truly want to find out if the earth hums

in b flat, or even what bees – remember those? – sound like, don't wear your earphones in the garden. Mother Nature needs all the attention we can pay her.